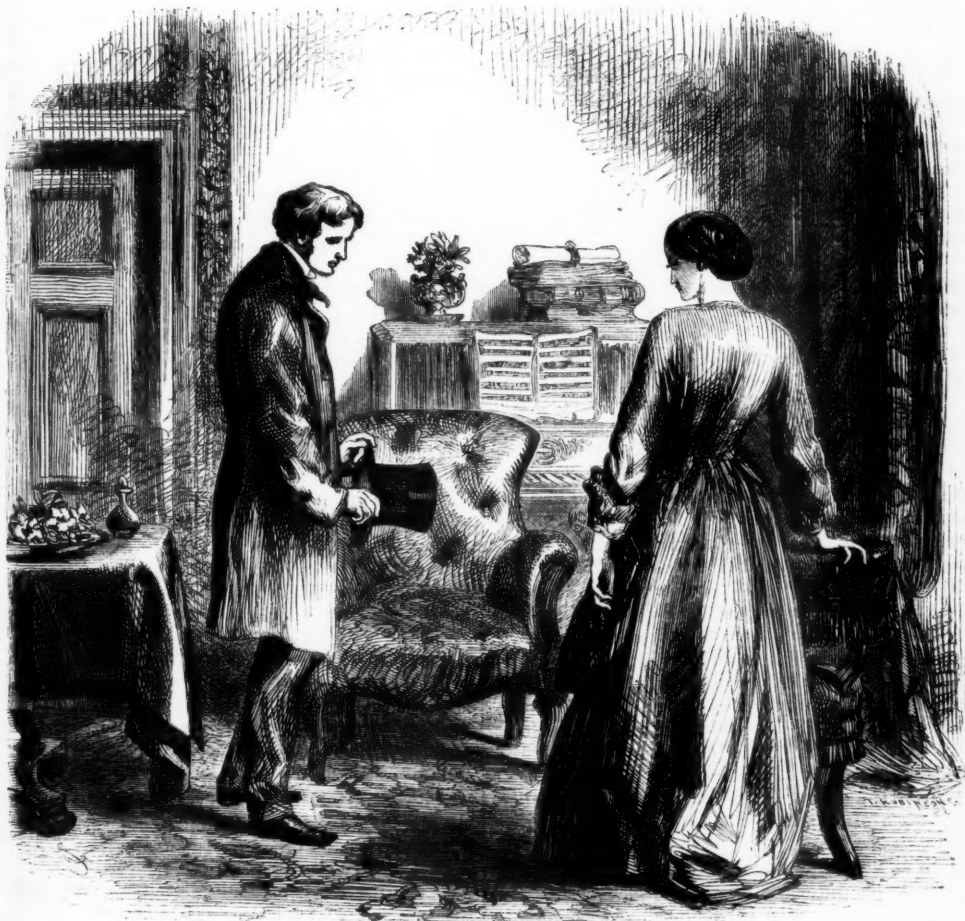


THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper.*



"I LEFT HER—HUMILIATED AND CONVICTED, YET ADMIRING."

STORY OF THE CROOKED SIXPENCE.

CHAPTER XXVII.—SIXPENCE MEETS WITH A FORMER
ACQUAINTANCE.

THE poor clerk's alarm gradually subsided. X. Y. Z. had been heard of no more; and the inquiries made of the little barber by his friend only elicited the fact that Mrs. Brown's lodger had not again made his appearance. Dismissing, therefore, as

well as he was able, these subjects from his mind, the lonely man went on the even tenor of his way, and it was observed by Mr. Keenedge that a pleasant smile of contentment or resignation was oftener seen on his poor lodger's countenance than before; whereat the benevolent little barber inwardly rejoiced.

One of the results of the poor clerk's restored equanimity was the resumption of his chronicles of a

Crooked Sixpence, which had been abruptly broken off, and which he recommenced as follows.

Years passed away, and after many and long travels, and a rapid succession of owners at one phase of my existence, and then a lengthened imprisonment in the purse of an old lady, who, fancying virtue in my crookedness, insisted on retaining me as a charm to secure good luck, I once more found myself in this great city.

It was then that you and I, my poor friend, met that second time, when I was made the instrument of saving you from self-destruction. But I will not speak of this.

One fine summer's day I was hastily dropped into a London bookseller's shop-till; and before the day closed, a voice penetrating the wooden walls of my cell conveyed to me an impression that a former acquaintance of other days was near at hand. The voice was that of a customer of my present owner, and he was addressed by name as Mr. Wakehurst.

"Your last work, Mr. Wakehurst—capital! magnificent! a first-rate work, sir; you should see how it sells."

"You speak as the bookseller now," said the author, with a grave smile. "As the publisher, you remember—"

"A-hem!" coughed the bookseller, a little taken aback; "publishers are not always infallible, Mr. Wakehurst."

"No, nor authors either."

"Well, that's fairly said, Mr. Wakehurst." Then, changing the subject, "And this book? Oh, nothing to you. You won't have it on those terms? Well, then, trade price; you are one of us, you know;" and thereupon the customer laid down a golden coin, and, receiving his change, departed with his purchase. And thus it was that Mr. Wakehurst became my owner.

A great number of years had passed since that evening when my new owner was Sir Geoffrey's guest; and you will not wonder that many changes had taken place in his person. He was now a staid and thoughtful man, of middle age; his countenance bore marks of carefulness, though perhaps not so many as might be expected; his hair had been thinned by time, but its colour was not changed; and his dress, though good in quality, had none of the foppishness which, in his earlier days, it had betrayed. Mr. Wakehurst was in truth an altered man.

With his purchase under his arm, this new owner of mine was threading his way rapidly through the crowded thoroughfares of the city, when a friendly hand was laid on his arm by one who was passing on the same way, and friendly greetings followed; and then the two friends walked on together.

Silently, almost, for a time, while the din and uproar of the multitudinous street traffic continued; but presently these sounds were in part stilled as a quieter quarter of the town was reached; and then conversation flowed lively and cheerfully. But it was broken at length by a sudden exclamation from my owner, which caused a look of wonder from his

friend. They were now in an aristocratic square. I could tell you its name, but no matter.

"I heard yesterday that this was going on; but I had forgotten all about it," continued Mr. Wakehurst, stopping short, and looking up with some degree of interest at the doors and windows of a large house.

"Ah! a sale by auction, I see," said his friend, a much younger man than himself; "but may I ask what there is in that circumstance which particularly arrests your attention?"

"Poor Sir Geoffrey!" said my owner, more in self-meditation than in reply to his friend's query, who at this time was carelessly reading one of the large flaunting bills which were disfiguring the walls, and were attached to the area railings, and which announced that the magnificent furniture, extensive library, and other effects of Sir Geoffrey —, at his late town residence in — Square, were then being offered to competition, under an execution, and by direction of the sheriff of Middlesex. In confirmation of this intelligence, through the windows were seen rooms thronged with curious gazers and busy bidders; while crowds were passing in and out at the hall doors, which, unguarded by porter or lackey, were widely thrown open. "Poor Sir Geoffrey!" said my owner again: "I little thought this would happen when I was last in this house."

"You know Sir Geoffrey, then?" rejoined his friend.

"Know him? Why, no, not exactly; I was once his guest, and only once. Let us enter." And, leading the way, he pushed through the crowd and entered, followed by his friend.

They passed unchallenged from room to room, and pressed up the broad grand staircase to the rooms above. All was confusion; but the furniture was not yet removed; and in the stately drawing-room, in which so many years ago my owner had fluttered as a humble patronised guest, taken up at the whim of a moment by a vain, heartless woman, and then neglected when the whim had passed away—in that same drawing-room the auctioneer was busy at his profession, and a cross fire of biddings was eagerly going on.

Mr. Wakehurst, however, did not enter to bid or to buy; and his curiosity, or his sentiment (call it which you please) being soon satisfied, he descended the stairs, and, still accompanied by his friend, was once more on the broad pavement.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME, AND THE CHANGES IT BRINGS ABOUT.

"You asked me, Stafford, if I were acquainted with Sir Geoffrey," said Mr. Wakehurst, as they walked slowly away: "if you will bear me company a few steps farther, I will tell you how and when I became for a few hours his guest."

"With pleasure," said my owner's young friend; and thereupon, Mr. Wakehurst explained what you, my friend, already know.

"Your hopes of patronage were doomed to early disappointment, then," remarked the younger man, when his companion had finished his short narrative.

"Happily they were," said the author.

"Happily? Pardon me; I should have chosen in preference to say 'unhappily.' True, you are above the need of private patronage now; but when you were, as you describe yourself, sir, an unknown and struggling man, in debt too, and with but a single shilling in your purse——"

"Not a shilling when I reached home," said my owner, correcting his friend; "for you should remember that I had spent that last shilling in the hire of a conveyance."

"True; well, then, under such circumstances, I should have thought you would have hailed even such patronage as Lady ——'s with transport."

"Yes, I should have done that, undoubtedly, and should have lived to regret it ever after. It was the very distress into which my sore disappointment plunged me, that taught me the need of self-exertion and self-dependence."

"It must have been a hard lesson, however," said the young man with a sigh. I understood that sigh. Young Stafford was an artist, just entering his profession, and his day-dreams were of the patronage of the rich and noble. My owner knew this; and wisely and kindly, therefore, did he thus speak of himself.

"A hard lesson? Ah, yes. Experience is a stern teacher, Stafford; but at some time or other we must all go to her school. Hard! Ay, so hard that but for one always beside me to comfort and cheer and encourage me, to bear more than her share of my burdens, and to submit cheerfully to poverty for my sake, I should perhaps have given up in despair."

"You speak of——"

"Of Mrs. Wakehurst—of my wife. You should know her, Stafford. Accompany me to my home, and I will introduce you."

"With all my heart," said the young artist; and for a little while they walked on in silence, broken at length by Stafford.

"And this Sir Geoffrey? Can you tell me anything of him now?"

"Nothing more than I have heard by the report of others; but though report is not always to be trusted, I believe that in this case it speaks truly."

"And report says?"

"—Says," continued my owner, "that Sir Geoffrey is a ruined man; that all his reputed wealth has been squandered, and that he is helplessly and irrecoverably in debt; that his estates have long been mortgaged to their entire value; that, at the time he knew himself to be hopelessly involved, he threw away thousands of pounds on a contested election; that he gambled recklessly on the turf and at the billiard-table; that afterwards, when he went on the continent to retrench, (this was when he ceased to be a member of Parliament,) he chose Baden Baden for his place of residence, that he might indulge his favourite passion for play unchecked; that almost every pound obtained from his tenants and sent to him by his steward was risked and lost at *rouge et noir*; and that his lady assisted, as far as she had it in her power, to dissipate the small remnant of his former wealth by gambling as high

as she dared in her own house, and with her own guests, until her name became notorious, and her parties were shunned by all who had characters for which they cared. Moreover—and I should have told you this before—rumour says that while yet money was at his command, Sir Geoffrey was surrounded by a set of human vampires, who preyed upon his weakness and folly, and, flattering him with visions and promises of enormous wealth, induced him to rush headlong into speculations of the most absurd and ruinous nature; and that among these speculators was the notorious Curlew——"

"What! the man who took in so many poor simpletons a few years ago, and then so mysteriously disappeared—committed suicide, some said—while others affirm that——"

"Yes; the same man. And, by the way, I remember his being one of the guests in—— Square, on the evening of which I have told you."

"No wonder, then," said the young artist, "that Sir Geoffrey's money vanished. And where does rumour say that Sir Geoffrey and his lady are now?" he asked.

"The lady, I understand, is living in miserable lodgings in some obscure street in Chelsea or its neighbourhood, subsisting on a scanty annuity; and Sir Geoffrey (as rumour also says) is safe from arrest in some small town in Germany, exercising upon others, I am afraid, the same detestable arts to which, when practised upon himself, he attributes his downfall."

"Sic transit gloria mundi," said the young artist; and he might have added something more; but at this moment an omnibus passed by, which my owner hailed, and, entering it, the friends were whirled towards their destination.

Mr. Wakehurst's residence was in the outskirts of the town, and sufficiently distant from it to be free from its noise and confusion. Unpretending, like its occupier, it had nevertheless some capabilities. It was retired from the public thoroughfare, though near it; and in this, also, it might be said to resemble my owner. Surrounding it was a garden of moderate extent, displaying both order and taste, and fragrant at that time with summer flowers. Through this garden Mr. Wakehurst and his companion passed, and approached by a serpentine gravelled path to the front door.

Through a little hall my owner led the way to a light and pleasant library, which opened by glass doors on to a grass plot, ornamented with flower-beds and belted round with evergreens and flowering shrubs—a calm and quiet seclusion for a brain-working man.

"This is my retreat, my workshop," said the author, looking round with pardonable affectionate pride on his crowded book-shelves, and pointing to his writing-table. My wife—I hear her voice in the garden—we will join her; but first let me give you one of the secrets of my success—golden rules for men like you and me, Stafford, whatever they may be to others." And saying this, my owner reached a book from its shelf, and opening it, laid his finger on this passage:—

"When I first came to London, I made my choice;

and I have no cause to repent it. I trace my success to these maxims, which are applicable to all professions:—1st. *Never to trust to genius for what can be obtained by labour*; 2nd. *Never to profess to teach what I have not studied to understand*; and 3rd. *Never to engage my word for what I do not my best to execute.*"

"There, sir," continued my owner, "you have my secret: now let us join my better spirit, my patient wife."

At this moment a gentle tap at the door arrested his steps, and a small slip of paper was put into my owner's hand by a servant maid.

"The water rate, if you please, sir," said she.

My owner smiled. "There's nothing like hard matters of fact like this, for bringing one down from the heroic regions," said he; "therefore, beware, Stafford; 'be bold, but not too bold.'" And therewith I was passed on, with sundry others of my own metal, to the water-rate collector, and I saw no more of my prosperous author.

Here ended for that time the Crooked Sixpence's story; and events were hurrying on in the history of the poor clerk which prematurely cut short its further records. Meanwhile, however, the writer's own narrative was uncompleted; and, having made an appointment for that evening with his generous and sympathising landlord, he speedily prepared himself and his room for Mr. Keenedge's reception. In due time the little barber arrived, and, being seated, his lodger entered at once on the business which had of late so often drawn them together.

CHAPTER XXIX.—THE POOR CLERK'S HISTORY DRAWS TOWARDS A CLOSE.

"I TOLD you," said the poor clerk, "that God was preparing my sin to be its own punishment, and that, though I little thought it then, I was on the verge of ruin. Here, then, I take up my story.

"I called one evening on Ellen, and was admitted. I found her in tears. She had that day heard fresh rumours of my dissolute and profligate habits, and her guardian had been exerting his powers of persuasion to the utmost—and, let me add, wisely and rightly and kindly towards her—to induce her at once to sever the ill-omened connection.

"I cannot tell you what arguments he had used, though I am at no loss to guess them; and though the effect produced by them fell short of his wishes, Ellen's good sense had coincided with his representations, and she had engaged that our familiar intercourse should be at least suspended. All this she told me; and, without wasting time in justifying the course she was compelled by her own judgment to take, she attempted to awaken my slumbering conscience, and, as she said, to recall to me my better self.

"At first I attempted to rally poor Ellen, and to win back her smiles by endearments, honied words, and vague promises. When I found that these had no charm, but only increased her distress, I broke out into violent declamations against the traitors and maligners who had poisoned her mind, and I dared them, through her, to prove the truth of their accusations. I accused her, also, of willingly lending an ear to my dishonour.

"All this Ellen heard in silence, until I had exhausted my powers of argument, or rather of invective; and then she spoke again—spoke sorrowfully, yet firmly and commandingly. I shall not attempt to repeat her words: it is enough that I broke from her at last, humiliated and convicted, yet admiring. I had never before seen in Ellen so much of the dignity and beauty of purity—never been so abashed in her presence.

"It was yet early; but I had no heart for gaiety then. I hastened to my lodgings, and shut myself in to brood over the events of that evening, and to think and plan how to win back the treasure which seemed to be retiring from my eager pursuit. I brooded over this, my friend, till I was desperate. I madly, inconsistently, and unjustly accused Ellen, in my heart, of being accessory to all the future which seemed to open before me. Yes, I had been vile, and I would be more vile. What mattered, now that ruin stared me in the face? let it come.

"For ruin did stare me in the face then. I have told you, my friend, that my patrimony was squandered as soon almost as I received it. But this was not all. Though I received a liberal salary from my employers, I was deeply in debt; and"—

"Don't go on with that part, John," now interposed Mr. Keenedge; "you needn't; I can see it all; it was just like the younger son in the blessed parable, I'm afraid; you began to be in want, John."

"It is very true," said the lonely man; "and I need not, as you say, enlarge upon this. Well, I was thinking over all this, and over that evening's trouble, but not penitently, when Owen came in.

"What is the matter with you?" said he, after he had slapped me on the shoulder, and looked searchingly into my face.

"I had long since begun to fear that man, Mr. Keenedge; he exercised the influence over me which a bad man with a strong mind exercises over a weaker-minded sinner, and I had yielded myself to his power till I felt unable to resist him; and yet I felt the chains, and they galled me, and while they galled me, I hugged them.

"What is the matter?" Owen asked again, when I had shaken off his hand.

"I told him what was the matter; and bitter reproaches began to fall from my lips, against him, against myself, against Ellen and her guardian, against all the world.

"There, that will do," said he, laughing; "and now you have eased your mind, come with me."

"I went with him unresistingly. It was too late for the theatre, but not for the tavern. There I drank deeply, to drown my troubles, as Owen said, and as I faintly echoed. Of what else passed that night I have not any distinct remembrance; I never had. I have a confused recollection, however, of leaving the tavern, and entering another house and another room, brilliantly lighted; of being dazzled with the glare; of the rattling of dice, and the shifting and shuffling of cards; of signing my name to a paper put before me; of returning long past midnight with Owen to his lodgings; and further than this memory fails me.

"I was too ill the next morning to go to business. Not so Owen, however, who was not only more seasoned than I was, but who had also been more cautious. He went to the counting-house; I sent (not by him, however) an excuse, pleading sudden illness.

"At night, when Owen returned, I was partially recovered, but had not returned to my own lodgings; he had requested me not to do so. I did not particularly remark upon his looks then, but they have haunted me since. I remembered afterwards that he was pale and stern, and that his whole manner towards me was altered; and when he spoke, his voice and tones were those of one who knew his power and meant to assert it.

"He told me, what you may have guessed, Mr. Keenedge, that on the previous evening, after leaving the tavern, I had played very high at the gambling table; he said that it was I who had insisted on going there, and that I had taken the cards and dice in hand against his warning advice; and this might be true; perhaps it was. At all events I had played, and had not only lost all the money I had about me—which was not much—but had given an I. O. U. to a large amount, to one of the players. I denied this; and then he took the paper from his pocket-book and held it before me. It was true; there was my name; and he—Owen—was the gambler to whom I had given it.

"My brain was dizzy; for I knew now that I was in the power of a merciless enemy; not that he could have enforced the claim, perhaps, in a court of law, but he could blast my character; and his looks told me that he would do this if I attempted to escape from him.

"Why should I tell you more?"

"No, don't John, please," said the little barber; "I can guess the rest. We see things like it in the paper every day a'most."

"It is enough," continued the poor clerk, "that that evening, before we parted, Owen had thrown off the mask of friendship, and I had become his slave; and that, together, we conspired to cheat and rob our employers, he showing me how. He had wanted a confederate, for one could not do it alone; but, by playing into each other's hands, we might do this without fear of detection, he said.

"Mr. Keenedge," continued the poor clerk, earnestly, "up to this time, I had been almost all that was bad and base; but I had never dreamt of being dishonest. But, let no one say, when giving way to one temptation, 'I will go thus far, and no farther.' Ah, friend, 'Facilis est descensus'—the downward step, you know—how easy! how naturally one follows the other! And so, from being a tavern haunter, a theatre lover, and a gambler, I became a thief and traitor.

"Six months after that evening," continued the poor clerk, "I stood in the prisoner's dock at the Old Bailey; Owen was by my side. Our employers, injured as they had been by us, were merciful—merciful to me. They appeared against me with reluctance; they said all they could in my favour; and they recommended me to mercy when the verdict of 'guilty' was returned.

"This recommendation had effect. Owen was

sentenced to a lengthened term of transportation; while on me fell the lighter doom of four years' imprisonment. You know my history now, thus far at least," said the poor clerk, averting his face, down which big tears were rolling; "you know my history now, Mr. Keenedge, and I will not ask you again to take my hand in friendship."

"You needn't ask it, John; no you needn't," sobbed the little barber, starting up and taking both of the solitary man's hands between his own, and pressing them with all fervour. "I arn't a preacher, John," continued he, never letting go his hold as he spoke; "far from it. But I read the Book, I do; and I know where 'tis writ, 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' There!" And saying this, Mr. Keenedge reverently withdrew, and might, any time within the next hour, have been detected weakly shedding many tears in his little room below.

MAHOGANY.

PERHAPS there is hardly a word in the English language which is more truly a household word than the one which stands at the head of this article. Under the domestic roof nearly all our surroundings are of mahogany; our book-cases, tables, chairs, desks, sideboards, sofas, musical instruments, and for the most part our bedsteads, are made of this material, and the use of it is so general that we can hardly conceive of a furnished house without the appliances of mahogany furniture. Yet, though the material is so common, there are comparatively few of us who have taken the trouble to inquire whence it is all derived, and to what sources and industrial agencies it is owing. It may not be unprofitable, therefore, and it will be far from uninteresting, to take a brief survey of the history of a mahogany trunk, from its growth in the untrodden forest, where its umbrageous limbs may yield a shelter to the panther and the wild boar, to its arrival in merry England, where, in polished state, it is of course expected to groan under the weight of John Bull's good cheer.

There are various sorts of mahogany, differing in an almost fabulous ratio in value. Thus, the African mahogany, which grows plentifully in the districts of Senegal, and is shipped to this country from Sierra Leone, is of comparatively small value, owing to its liability to warp into ungainly shapes; the wood is hard and of close texture, but, in consequence of its characteristic failing, it is never used for purposes of ornament, and is chiefly in demand for the construction of articles of small expense and great strength, such as engine-frames, gun-carriages, mangles, etc. Other kinds are found in the East Indies; but very little mahogany of oriental growth comes to this country, save in the shape of manufactured articles. Of the mahogany which is brought to these islands, by far the major portion is felled in the forests on the coast of Honduras, a province of Mexico, where it grows in vast quantities, rarely in groves or even in groups of trees, but mingled with other forest timber, and surrounded

with dense scrub and underwood utterly impenetrable by the ordinary traveller. The tree is a grand and magnificent object, having enormous branches of solid timber, and sometimes reaching to a great height; but, unlike most of the tropical trees, it seems to have no special partiality for any particular locality. The seeds are winged, and are carried in all directions by the wind, and it would seem that wherever they drop, they take kindly to the soil and flourish; thus they grow luxuriantly in low marshy grounds, or in a deep alluvial soil, and they are found also flourishing on rocks apparently bare of soil, and sending their roots deep into the stony fissures, which they widen and rend asunder by the slow force of their expansion.

It is a fact, however, that the different value of the wood is determined for the most part by the locality where it grows: that which takes root on a fat or wet soil is soft, even-grained, pale and porous, and is of the lowest value, while that which grows without moisture, save what it derives from the atmosphere, is hard, figured, knotty, and involuted in grain, and densely close in texture, as well as of a deep rich colour. The difference in value between the two kinds may be estimated by the fact, that for the best sort pianoforte-makers have been known to give as much as £200 per cubic yard, while the same quantity of the commoner kind would be well sold for ten or twelve pounds. The more valuable kind is, however, rarely used in the mass, but is cut up into veneers to form the polished surfaces of fine cabinet work. Of these finer sorts, known in the market under the name of Spanish mahogany, the larger portion comes from the mountainous districts of Cuba and St. Domingo. Formerly large quantities came to England from Jamaica, but the supply from thence has nearly ceased, owing to the exhaustion of the stock; the Jamaica mahogany was much prized, and is said still to command the highest biddings. No attempts have ever been made, so far as we are aware of, to establish mahogany plantations; as the tree takes two hundred years to grow before it is accounted fit for felling, we need not wonder if it has been neglected by the planter. The use of mahogany with us is comparatively recent; for although the beauty of the wood was recognised in Sir Walter Raleigh's time, by his ship carpenter while lying off Trinidad, in 1595, it was not brought into notice in England until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Dr. Gibbons, an eminent physician, exhibited to his friends the first articles of English domestic furniture manufactured from it.

We will now proceed to get out our logs of mahogany from the depths of the Honduras forest. The work is done by gangs of men, who may be either slaves or free labourers, or the gang may consist of both working together. They are all under the control of a captain, and they number among them a mahogany huntsman, the nature of whose peculiar function will presently appear. The number of the whole gang can be hardly less than five-and-twenty, and sometimes amounts to as many as fifty. The work always commences in the month of August, and it is the huntsman who inaugurates the proceedings. It is his business to hunt out

trees, which must be growing in the neighbourhood of a river—the nearer the better—and which it will pay to cut down. The woods, as we have already remarked, being impenetrable to travellers, he sets out on his mission armed with a manchete, a kind of ponderous cutlass formed for delivering powerful blows; with this instrument he carves every step of his way through the bushy and tangled underwood, until he arrives at some elevated point. Here he ascends a tree and looks out for mahogany wood; he knows it instantly at sight, because in this month the leaves of the tree are of a brilliant orange colour, and he can trace the well-known hue over a large expanse of forest many miles in extent. He takes a very careful survey, and forms a scheme of operations, contriving to plan as much work, and no more, as can be accomplished during the season. Having marked down his prey, which will consist of a number of trees standing pretty nearly together, if he can so manage it—though he will not scruple to take in a promising trunk at a mile or two distant from the rest—his next course is to cut his way to them. While chopping away at this work, he sometimes discovers that the huntsman belonging to some rival gang has marked the same prey, and is hewing *his* way to it from some other point of observation. In this case, the race and the strife become desperate: Pompey, on this side, hews and chops, and toils and sweats, yelling at his labour like a madman; while Sambo, on that side, sweats and toils, and chops and hews, and responds with yells just as frantic and more defiant. It is a pretty pair of black babes in the wood, brandishing their gleaming weapons, not at each other, but at the stubborn bush which keeps them asunder. This energetic warfare, however, leads to no bloodshed—only to excessive perspiration. As, among whalers, the first harpoon into the blubber secures the whale, so, among mahogany hunters, the first manchete that severs the bark secures the trunk.

Having marked down his prey, and set his brand upon them, the huntsman returns to the captain and reports progress. The captain summons his gang, and, following in the tract made by the huntsman, the felling of the trees immediately commences. This is anything but a summary operation. In the first place, the tree is not cut down near the root, like a British oak, but is severed at the height of some ten or more feet from the ground; the reason of this being, probably, that the lower part of the trunk, having a coarse grain which is exceedingly porous and soft, is as likely to sink as to swim when it gets into the water, and is in other respects valueless. A stage has therefore to be erected round each tree, with an opening on one side for the fall. Though felling in this manner is evidently most perilous, yet a fatal accident rarely happens, and the trees are felled in less time than would be imagined possible. After the felling comes the lopping and clearing, which is done at more leisure by one section of the gang, while the others are differently employed; the branches, it may be observed, yield better timber than the trunk, their wood being of much closer grain and more richly figured, though the trunk, from its greater mass, is invariably of most value.

While the loppers are busy with their axes, the rest of the gang are engaged in the onerous labour of cutting an open and practicable road through the dense forest, for the transport of the logs to the river's brink. This forms by far the most wearisome part of their labour, and generally occupies them for several months. Before they begin, they build themselves comfortable habitations by the river side, and during the felling season the several mahogany works form so many villages on the banks of the stream, all of which are destined to disappear when the season comes to a close.

The main road, like the first track of the huntsman, has to be cut through the underwood with the manchet; it must be wide enough to admit of the passage of the timber-wain or truck; but it is done marvellously quick, a single hand making progress at the rate of a hundred yards a-day. But when all the underwood is cut away and removed, the road is not half made: there still remain on the track a number of trees which are of no value in the market, and which, standing in the way, have to be got rid of. Some of these are so hard as to turn the edge of the axe, and will succumb to nothing short of fire. If it be necessary to build a bridge—and sometimes many strong bridges are needed, either to cross brooks or chasms—this waste timber is available for the purpose. After the road has been cleared of the wood, it has finally to be levelled for the passage of the wains; and this labour is even more trying and wearisome than the clearing. Further, it rarely or ever happens that a single road is sufficient; branch roads have generally to be made in different directions, and occasionally a mile or two will be levelled for the sake of a single tree.

Supposing all the requisite road-making to be finished by the middle of December, the captain of the gang will think himself well off. By this time the loppers have denuded the fallen trees of their waste, and the huge trunks and branches lie ready for further operations. There is still plenty of work to be done before the logs are ready to be carried. As it would be impossible to transport them over such uneven ground in a round form, the extemporized road being the worst imaginable causeway, they have all first to be squared: this is done solely by the axe; and where the logs are numerous, it may be readily conceived that the work is long and tedious. We should state that before squaring they are cross-cut into lengths, not according to length, but according to weight; the rule being, that each log or length should form a load for the wain, which is drawn by seven pairs of oxen. This cross-cutting, squaring, and trimming, with the final levelling of the road, occupies the gang up to the end of March. By this time, and not before, the ground has been dried by the sun to a sufficient degree of hardness for the transport, which generally begins the first week in April. This is by far the most exciting and the most picturesque part of the whole business. The gang is again divided into portions—the loaders, the drivers, and the men who cut food for the cattle. The loaders erect a cabin for their accommodation

among the logs, and remain on the spot while the others are journeying backward and forward. Owing to the fierce heat of the sun, the cattle cannot be got to work in the day-time, and the transport has consequently to be effected in the night.

About sundown the oxen are harnessed, and the teams set forth one after another; they may have from six to a dozen miles to travel, and they so time their departure that the first may arrive at the spot about an hour before midnight. The loaders, who have been sleeping since morning, are aroused by the shouts and whips of the drivers, and use all diligence in getting the logs on the wains, which they do by pushing them up an inclined plane with levers. At this they are employed for some hours, the trucks setting forth on their downward journey in sufficient time to arrive at the river before the heat of the day begins. The chief part of the route towards the river has to be performed during the night, by the light of torches, and presents one of the most picturesque spectacles afforded by the industrial labours of man. The glare of the torches gleaming on the pale foliage and on the swart spectral forms of the half-naked men; the crowd of struggling cattle, the cracking of long whips, the crashing of wheels through the withered bush, the clouds of dust and resinous smoke, amid which, under a quivering lurid light, men, oxen, and the huge unwieldy logs are hurrying and plunging forward with incessant shouts and cries—all together make up a picture whose parallel is hardly found elsewhere.

When the trucks or wains arrive at the river, the logs are severally marked with the owner's brand, and then are tumbled into the stream, which at this period is probably not deep enough to float them. The loading and carrying goes on until about the end of May, at which time, with a punctuality that rarely fails, down come the periodical rains, and in an hour or two the hard roads, transformed into deep sloughs of mud, are no longer practicable, and all the carrying throughout the forest ceases at once. The heavy flood continues to pour down without intermission until the middle of June or thereabouts, by which time the thirsty river has swollen to a prodigious volume, and the logs are afloat. When all is ready, they are loosed from their moorings, and the whole gang, getting on board canoes, accompany them down the stream, freeing them from any obstacles they may meet in their way, and guiding them to some convenient spot in the open water, where they are stopped by a boom stretched across the river. Here, perhaps, will be congregated in one broad floating mass, the harvests of twenty different mahogany gangs, all mingled together. The work of separation is, however, easy, by reason of the distinctive brands; and now each gang, collecting their own logs, bind them together in large rafts, and pilot them to the wharves of the several proprietors. Here they are craned out of the water on to the quays, and, as they have suffered much in their violent passage down—by dashing against rocks and by collision with each other—they are again trimmed with the axe, and reduced to a proper shape for the market. The buyers are soon

on the spot, and if the demand is brisk, the logs so lately the monarchs of the forest are confined in the hold of a ship, and on their way to Europe, where we need not follow them, as we all know their ultimate destiny.

It will be seen that the above species of industry must be necessarily speculative and expensive, and cannot be carried on without capital. It is calculated that the cost of a mahogany-cutting expedition amounts to about fourscore pounds per man employed, including all expenses of plant, cattle, etc. The profits, however, must be liberal, looking to the fact that there is generally a ready sale for the wood, and that the trees yield a large quantity. A single log has been known to weigh fifteen tons, and to yield over five thousand superficial feet. Latterly, the preference for walnut wood in articles of furniture has told injuriously on the value of the finer sorts of mahogany; this, however, is a mere freak of fashion, and, like other fashions, may be destined to but a brief existence.

VENICE.

VENICE, the Queen of the Adriatic, once the head of a flourishing republic, in possession of extensive home and foreign dominions, figured for more than a thousand years among the independent states of Europe, and was for a time the mistress of the seas, a grand centre of commerce, a splendid temple of art, envied for wealth, feared and courted for power, renowned for statesmanship and public spirit, whose alliance was sought alike by Mohammedan and Christian governments. But for upwards of half a century, with the exception of a very brief interval, it has been simply a humiliated and melancholy city, the enthralled capital of an equally enthralled province, roughly trampled on by the heel of the alien. It is now deserted by half its proper inhabitants, rich only in emblems of past political greatness, decayed monuments and desolate palaces, while filled with military, cannon, spies, and police, coercing the native remnant, who burn with impatience to join the colours of a rejoicing nationality, and raise the shout of "Down with the Austrians!" "Freedom for Italy!" "Viva Garibaldi!" "Viva Victor Emmanuel!"

The position of the place is very remarkable, and its entire character is not less unique.

There is a glorious city in the sea.
The sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
Ebbing and flowing; and the salt sea-weed
Clings to the marble of her palaces.
No track of men, no footsteps to and fro,
Lead to her gates. The path lies o'er the sea,
Invisible; and from the land we went,
As to a floating city—steering in,
And gliding up her streets as in a dream,
So smoothly, silently—by many a dome,
Mesque-like, and many a stately portico,
The statues ranged along an azure sky;
By many a pile, in more than eastern pride,
Of old the residence of merchant-kings;
The fronts of some, though time had shattered them,
Still glowing with the richest hues of art,
As though the wealth within them had run o'er."

Rogers, the writer of this pleasing description, did not anticipate that it would be rendered inaccurate.

It is so in one point, for the services of the gondola have been superseded by a railway-bridge, in the conveyance of passengers across the lagoon between the mainland and the city. This truly great work, completed in the year 1845, consists of 222 arches, extending nearly two miles and a quarter in length. It consumed in its construction 80,000 larch trees, 21,000,000 of bricks, and 176,000 cubic feet of stone. Thus fastened by a material link to the mainland of Italy, while connected with its population by the strong ties of blood, language, historical associations, and political aspirations, it is to be hoped that Venice will share in the better fortunes which have apparently dawned upon the rest of the peninsula. Approaching the bridge on the land-side, at a little distance on the left, close to the lagoon, stands the strong fort of Malghera, the fall of which, after being held by the popular party in 1848-9, terminated the insurrection of that period.

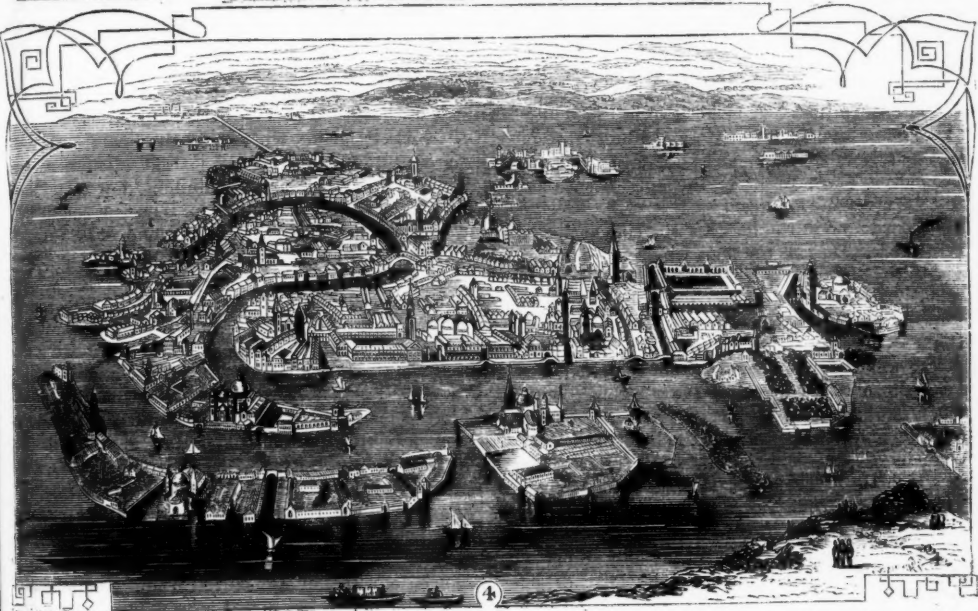
In all other respects the poetical description is correct. The salt water penetrates every district of the strangely situated city, for its buildings cover no less than seventy-two islands or shoals, and rest upon substructions of wood or stone. These islets were formed by the detritus brought down by the river in bygone ages, which was here arrested by the sea and deposited, as well as along other parts of the coast. Their separating channels are now canals, of which there are 147, crossed by 306 steep bridges. The canals are the great thoroughfares of the place, and answer the purpose of streets, while gondolas are substitutes for our carriages and cabs. There are indeed streets, properly so called, and every dwelling may be reached on foot. But they are not wider than twelve feet from house to house, and mostly much narrower, so that locomotion is chiefly carried on by water. But little occasion has the sight-seer to use his legs, at least out of doors, being afloat as soon as he leaves his hotel, and floated back to it again. Hence it has been said, that to enter Venice is literally to "go on board," with this difference from ship-board, that there is no danger of sea-sickness. The change of level in the water-streets, from the ebb and flow, is very regular, and amounts to a fall and rise of from two to three feet. But now,

"In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
And silent rows the songless gondolier."

The well-known strain of the boatmen, consisting of alternate stanzas from Tasso's "Jerusalem," passed away with the independence of the State; and though grand open-air music still daily salutes the ear, it finds no favour with the populace, proceeding from the military band of the dominant power.

The principal or grand canal, nearly 300 feet wide, lined with palaces, winds through the city in the form of the letter S, and divides it into two unequal portions. This is crossed by only one bridge, the steepest, largest, and finest, called the Rialto, from the name of the chief and first occupied island, on which it abuts. It is magnificently situated, and well seen from the front windows of adjoining hotels. The full style is *Ponte di Rialto*, just as

ILLUSTRATION ON PAGE 777.—1. The Bridge of Sighs. 2. The Grand Canal. 3. The Rialto. 4. Bird's-eye View of Venice. 5. The Ducal Palace. 6. The Cathedral of St. Mark.



we say Westminster or Southwark Bridge. Another of these structures revives mournful recollections:—

"I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs,
A palace and a prison on each hand."

It rises to an unusual height above a narrow canal behind the former palace of the doges, to which it served as a communication by a covered gallery with the public prisons. Over this bridge prisoners condemned to die were conducted to hear their sentences, and were then led off to execution. Hence the name. Some state dungeons, directly belonging to the old palace, are open to inspection, as if to inspire the visitor with a horror of despotism, whether administered by an individual or a body of patricians. They are hideous recesses in the walls, the lower tiers of which are quite dark. No light was ever allowed, and little elbow-room was afforded, for they are not more than five paces in length, two and a half in width, and seven feet in height. A wooden pallet, raised a foot from the ground, was the only furniture. A small hole in the wall let in the damp air of the passages, and admitted the food of the miserable captive. Verily, in the sorrows of modern Venice we have the sins of the fathers visited upon the children.

We are now in the heart of the city, at the prime centre of attraction, the spot which is usually first visited by the stranger, and to which he most frequently returns; for while singularly impressive or imposing objects are at hand, the site is open to the cool breeze from the Adriatic. The doge's palace was the actual residence of the chief magistrate down to the close of the sixteenth century, when it was exclusively appropriated to the offices of government. It contains the halls of the various councils of administration, in much the same state in which they were before the loss of independence. The building forms the east side of the Piazzetta, an oblong area opening into the Piazza, or great square of St. Mark. Here is the richly embellished church of the patron saint, with its lofty detached campanile, or bell-tower, and the celebrated bronze horses, obtained as plunder during the sack of Constantinople in the fourth crusade. Over beautiful pedestals elaborately ornamented in front of the church, three gonfalons of silk and gold once proudly waved to the breeze, symbolizing the triple dominions of the republic—Venice, Cyprus, and the Morea. The tricolor took their place, and speedily gave way to the standards of Austria. But we must not linger upon material aspects, having in view some historical jottings.

The republic of which Venice became the head antedated its existence as a city. The terror of two conquerors, separated from each other in point of time by some thirteen centuries, led to the rise and fall of the state. It began with Attila: it ended with Bonaparte. Flying from the arms of the ruthless barbarian, all the best families of Cisalpine Gaul betook themselves to the isles and shoals of the lagoons as a place of refuge, where for a time they had little food but fish, no wealth but their boats, and no merchandise but salt, which they began to exchange for provisions. They had their different magistrates, till anarchy induced twelve

principal men to propose the appointment of a single chief magistrate for life. This was carried by acclamation at Heraclea, A.D. 697, where Saul Anastaso, a citizen of that place, was saluted by the title of Doge, a corruption of *Dux*, duke. In 809, the seat of government was transferred to the Rialto, one of the isles of Venice; and from that period its rise as a great city may be said to date. Here, in the year named, Angelo Participazio was chosen doge. He was followed by seventy-one successors in the dignity down to October, 1797, when, by treaty signed in the mean house of a humble village, Campoformio, the conquering Bonaparte, after flattering the Venetians with the highest hopes, shamefully abandoned them to the rule of Austria. Manin, who closed the long line of doges, dropped senseless to the ground, when required to take the oath of allegiance to the German emperor, overwhelmed by the misfortune and disgrace of his country. Portraits of the doges, the early ones painted from fancy, form a long frieze round the hall of the grand council in the ducal palace. But there is one blank, where a black veil appears, with the well-known inscription, "Hic est locus Marini Falieri, decapitati pro criminibus." Exasperated by a personal insult, he entered into a conspiracy to murder the leading patricians, and was beheaded in 1355.

The head of the state was appointed for life, or during good behaviour, for many of the doges were very roughly handled. Out of about forty who succeeded each other in four centuries, nearly one half were either killed or blinded, or were compelled to abdicate, and banished. One who had made himself justly obnoxious, Pietro Candiano IV, underwent a terrible fate in 976. Assailed in the palace, he successfully resisted with his partizans the efforts of the besiegers to dislodge him, upon which they resorted to the expedient of smoking him out, by firing the next building. A tremendous conflagration ensued, in which he perished, and the first church of St. Mark was destroyed. Whatever of the popular element might originally mingle in the form of government was gradually and effectually excluded from it. For the last five centuries of the existence of the state, all power was in the hands of a patrician order, consisting of families rendered influential by wealth or numbers, or both, whose names were entered on the *Libbro d'Oro*, or roll of the Venetian aristocracy. They chose the grand council from among themselves; and from this body emanated the doge, his privy council, the senate, and the council of ten. These last constituted a supreme court for offences against the state, the members of which were renewed yearly. The proceedings were in secret, and the sentences were executed in secret. The sittings were held in a hall, in the ante-room of which, at the entrance, there was a lion's head, the terrible Lion's Mouth, into which the secret denunciations were thrown. It is impossible to conceive of machinery more directly calculated to secure the removal of personally obnoxious individuals, and thus minister to the gratification of private vengeance.

Upon a vacancy occurring in the chief magistracy, the grand council at first nominated twenty-four

persons for the office, who reduced their own number to eleven. These eleven repaired to the church of St. Mark, and there elected one of themselves by plurality of votes. The person chosen was then presented to the people, with the announcement, "This is the doge elect, if you approve of him." But such an appeal was a mere form, as the magistrates immediately withdrew. The new doge was crowned on the platform at the top of the Giant's Staircase in the palace. He was then carried through the city seated on a throne, throwing gold and silver among the populace. If married, his wife, the dogressa, was inaugurated with great splendour, at least down to the close of the sixteenth century. Clad in cloth of gold, and wearing a crown, she was conducted from her home in the state-galley, the Bucentaur; was saluted on landing with strains of music and peals of artillery; and was enthroned in the ducal palace, surrounded by her ladies, high festival closing the day. But it so happened that Pope Clement VIII sent one of the Venetian queens a golden rose blessed by himself; and, according to the laws of papal etiquette, this was a gift properly belonging to none but right regal personages. Upon this discovery being made, the senate took the alarm. They were ungallant enough to deprive the poor lady of her rose; and a heavy blow and discouragement was given to all aspiring dames in Venice, for thenceforth female coronations ceased.

For many centuries, ascension-days were grand gala times, when the city was eminently

"The pleasant place of all festivity,
The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy."

Up betimes was the doge to act the part of a bridegroom. Attended by his greybeards, the councillors and senators, all dressed in scarlet and gold, he went on board his galley, trimmed for the occasion, drums and trumpets sounding. They proceeded in the direction of the sea; and near the entrance of the lagoon, the potentate formally espoused the Adriatic, by dropping a ring into the water. This ceremony, long before the last of the doges, had fallen into disuse.

"The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord;
And, annual marriage now no more renewed,
The Bucentaur lies rotting unrestored—
Neglected garment of her widowhood!

"St. Mark yet sees his lion where he stood,
Stand, but in mockery of his withered power,
Over the proud place where an emperor sued,
And monarchs gazed, and envied in the hour
When Venice was a queen with an unequal'd dowry."

Time has rendered one portion of these lines incorrect. At the close of the last century, the revolutionists stripped the state vessel of its ornaments; and after having been used as a gun-boat and a prison, it perished by fire in 1824. A model of it is preserved in the arsenal.

The commencement of the fifteenth century was perhaps the most flourishing period in the history of Venice. Then the expiring Doge, Mocenigo, summoned the principal senators around his death-bed, and addressed them in remarkable words. "I leave the country in peace and prosperity. Our merchants have a capital of ten millions of golden

ducats in circulation, upon which they make an annual profit of four millions. I have reduced the public debt by four millions of ducats. We have 45 galleys and 300 other ships of war; 3000 merchant vessels, and 52,000 sailors; 1000 nobles with incomes varying from 700 to 4000 ducats each; eight naval officers fit to command a large fleet; a hundred others fit to command smaller squadrons; many statesmen, jurisconsults, and wise men." At that time the arsenal or dockyard gave employment to 16,000 workmen, and presented the scene of activity which Dante sketched and strikingly applied in the "Inferno."

"As in the arsenal of Venice boils
Tenacious pitch in winter, to repair
The bark disabled by long watery toils;
For since to venture forth they are afraid,
One here a vessel builds, another there
Caulks that which many voyages hath made;
One strikes the prov, one hammers at the poop,
One mends a main, and one a mizen sail,
One shapes an oar, another twists a rope;
So, not by fire beneath, but art divine,
Boiled up thick pitch throughout the gloomy vale."

The arsenal, on the east side of the city, is two miles in circuit, surrounded with battlemented walls. It contains two large and two small basins, with dry docks, building slips, and the necessary workshops. From hence went out the vessels which took part in the triumphs of Chioggia and Lepanto. Here is preserved the armour of Henry of Navarre, sent by him as a present to the senate; and here is the monument to the memory of the last admiral, Angelo Emo, who caused the Venetian flag to be respected in the Mediterranean—one of the earliest works of Canova. The place now tells a tale of departed glory, being more of a storehouse and museum, than used for ship-building and launches.

The same tale is told by the condition of many a palace and many a long ennobled family. Embark in a gondola at the Piazzetta, and go up the grand canal. There on the left bank is the Foscari palace. This great family can be traced back to the ninth century. It attained patrician rank in the twelfth, when members of it were admitted to the Grand Council. In the fifteenth, Francesco Foscari became doge, and reigned for the long term of twenty-nine years. A fine portal at the principal entrance of the ducal residence was executed in his time; and his statue, kneeling before the lion of St. Mark, remained in connection with it down to the democratic outbreak in the last century, when it was destroyed. Being deposed on the ground of age and incapacity, the old man took the event so much to heart that he died on hearing the bell of St. Mark's toll for the inauguration of his successor. The Palazzo Foscari, a beautiful edifice, was soon afterwards built. There were sumptuous exhibitions of wealth in it, with balls, revels, and banquets, in 1574, when its owner became the host of Francis I of France. No other abode in Venice was deemed so fitting for the accommodation of royalty. But in the present century, the military authorities seized upon the palatial building for strategic reasons, turned it into an Austrian barrack, and rude Croats have bivouacked where a sovereign lodged. No representatives of the

family now remain, except in complete obscurity. Federigo Foscari, born exceedingly rich, died very poor in 1811; Domenico became an actor on the Italian stage; and Marianna married a coach-maker of Pordenone.

There is often mute eloquence in dead figures. Venice contained 140,000 inhabitants when the French entered under the flag of democracy, and handed them over to the Austrians. The population now scarcely exceeds 60,000, for the deaths have annually exceeded the births by nearly 1000, owing to the young and enterprising quitting the city, whenever it has been practicable, leaving the old at home to die by the sepulchre of their fathers. This invariably takes place to some extent or other wherever liberty and property have no adequate security—to say nothing of life—and public authority maintains a system of espionage in private society. It is not pleasant to have to hand over sixty per cent. of an income to an absolute government in taxation—just £600 out of £1000; nor congenial to high blood to have your stockings pulled off to see if there are any letters secreted in them; nor agreeable to think that your neighbour in the next chair at the café, so well dressed and obliging, so smooth-tongued and voluble, may be a spy of the police on the watch for an incautious expression; nor is it desirable to run the remotest risk, at any hour of the night or of the day, of being whisked off to some distant prison, without trial, or form of trial, or the mockery of a form, to live there for months upon the eight sous a day allowed by a paternal administration. Such things have happened to gentlemen of rank, lawyers of eminence, and other professionalists, whose incomes have of course ceased during their incarceration, and whose families have in the meanwhile been reduced to straits or beggary.

All well enough merely to visit Venice, especially to those who are art-smitten, fond of the mediæval, and happen to be there in spring, when there are no mosquitoes astir, or stanches from the canals, as during the summer heats, and no bitterly cold winds from the snow-crowned Alps, as in the winter months. But even a visit at any season has now to many its foil. Clear and unclouded may be the vernal sky; delightful then the climate; and nothing more delicious than the evening scene, as you walk the mole, while the moonbeams sparkle on the water, and light up the tall campanile. But mark the artillery around ready to blaze away; and hark! tramp, tramp, tramp, comes every moment more distinctly upon the ear. It is the footfall of the guard, marching in long single file through the narrow streets, winding about with them like the interminable sea-serpent, every soldier with a musket, and every musket primed to do instant execution. We are quite content to bid to all such places a long and last good-bye, till, (as we sincerely hope will soon be the case with Venice,) they are under the government of laws which respect personal rights, and contemplate the public good, rather than the will of an absolutist Power. May the time soon come when, both as regards civil and religious liberty, "Italy shall be free from the Alps to the Adriatic."

A TWILIGHT ADVENTURE.

AN APPARITION EXTRAORDINARY.

ABOUT the centre of a great dreary common, distant some three miles from the little town of C—, and just at the meeting-place of two footpaths, which may be traced far over the sombre waste by their weary whiteness, stand three lightning-scathed elms, battered and seared by fire and storm, barkless, livid, and ghost-like in the dim twilight. And oh! the oppressive solitude and silence of that spot at such an hour.

It was just when the twilight of a September evening lay deepest on the border-land of day and night, that my homeward path led me past the blasted elms. The friends I had just left were such as Percy, or Ritson, or Scott, would have loved to commune with—full of old ballad lore. Quaint old words, breathed in the soft sweet voice of the mistress of the house to a quaint old melody, still rang in my ears. And this was the burthen that haunted me:—

"As I was walking a' alane,
I heard twa corbies makin' a mane;
The aunc unto the t'other did say,
Where sall we gang and dine the day?"

The words of the ballad were well enough remembered, and I was trying to recall the air; but the fourth line baffled me. I could not get it to run rightly at all, and in vain did I repeat over and over,

"Where sall we gang and dine the day?"

in different keys, now higher and now lower—

Wholly intent upon this vexatious interruption to my musical reveries, I drew near to the goblin trees, and, for aught I know, might have passed them unnoticed, had not my little dog Trot, who was trotting quietly on, nose to ground, as was his wont, a yard or two in advance, suddenly stopped short in my way, so that I almost stumbled over him, and he then slunk covering at my heels. At the same moment there reached my ears a faint rustle as of footsteps through the heather, or perhaps merely the rush of a startled rabbit into the gorse. But be this as it may, ye lovers of the marvellous, what a spectacle met my eyes, as then for the first time I lifted them to the blasted elms!

From a huge broken limb of the central tree depended an object that bore the semblance of a living creature, yet altogether unlike any that I had ever seen or read of. It loomed out from the dark background of cloudy sky, likest to one of those vast vampires which travellers have described as sometimes seen in the depths of the South American forest. Like them, it hung by the hind feet to the branch, swaying slowly to and fro. But then it was white—a livid white, like that of the barkless tree—white head, and body, and legs, and wide-extended wings. The wind, too, wafted from it a ghoulis odour, indescribable, that told a tale of fresh-spilt blood.

Confess, now, candid reader, long you not, as I did, to know something more of the monster; to be rid of such a night-mare of doubt; to be able to

* "I heard two crows making a moan."

call it by some known name; to find out whether to laugh or weep, to clap hands or to tremble? How, then, shall I dare to tell you the whole truth, and to call upon you to let your curiosity be as easily satisfied as mine was? How persuade you to think, with me, discretion the better part of valour, and to wait with patience equal to mine the possible denouement of time? The fact is that, after a very brief deliberation, I determined to give the tree and its "uncanny" burthen a wide berth, and so arrived at home unharmed, though somewhat startled and confounded by what I had witnessed.

This is, I am willing to admit, a very unromantic, and therefore improper, conclusion to my story. Had I described my horror at the sight—how my very hair rose on end till it lifted my broad-brimmed straw from my head, and how I fled fear-ridden, awe-spurred, and terror-winged, over the wild waste, pursued by unearthly howls, and the flap, flap, flap of strange wings, until I fell half-dead, and so on—this would of course be far more interesting, and a more proper and normal termination to my adventure. Of all this I am well aware; but then you see, discerning reader, Truth contradicts oftentimes, and flatly, the notion that he is "stranger than fiction," and in this case brought a very romantic story to a very unromantic end.

* * * * *

About a week had passed since the evening of my mysterious adventure, when, on taking up the county paper, a certain paragraph caught my eye, and, ere I had glanced far down it, the mystery of my twilight apparition was solved.

"A DARING SHEEPSTEALER.—On Tuesday last, a sheep was stolen from a field about two miles from this town (C—itsself), in the occupation of Mr. J. D. That gentleman's shepherd counted the sheep, as usual, soon after half-past seven o'clock on that evening, when he discovered that one was missing. Supposing it had got astray on the common, he did not mention it to his master that night. Next morning, by five o'clock, he was out on the common looking for it. When he reached the well-known 'blasted elms,' near the centre, he discovered evident signs, both on the trees and on the ground below, that a sheep had been killed, or at least *cleaned there*. He followed the traces of blood as far as the large chalk hole near H—Wood, where the skin was found concealed under the bushes, and there all trace was lost. It is clear that the villain or villains, who have so far eluded pursuit, were old and daring hands at the business, as the theft must have been committed before dark, and the sheep cut up close to the footpath that leads from P—to C—. This path, however, is but little frequented, especially after 'dark, owing to its bad repute among the country folk."

THE BLACK COUNTRY.

CHAPTER X.—A FEW MORE LIONS IN THE BLACK COUNTRY.

"Here be the altar flames that rise, at grisly Mammon's call;
Those Babel sounds are litanies, to worship him withal;
The hammer's clank, the flying wheel, lend music to the choir;
His votaries feel no lack of zeal, through all this land of fire;

And though he thirst for human blood, he shall not thirst in vain.
This flaming land shall yield him food, from thousands yearly slain;
Small heed have we of human life, 'tis bought and sold for hire;
Till death, in every form is rife, in this dread land of fire."

Who, that knows anything of the mining district, is not familiar with the Abbotsford furnaces, and their three flaming chimneys, which shed a lurid gleam on all around? They always reminded me of gigantic *ricks*, only that they were made of brick instead of hay, and had at the top of them, some forty feet from the ground, what you do not often see in farm-yards, namely, tongues of fire issuing out of some things which, at a distance, resembled monster buckets, on the summit of the ricks. He who has once peeped down those "buckets" will not easily forget either the sight or the sensation.

We all mounted in the "lift," a vehicle not dissimilar in construction to the skip, only its ascent and descent were assisted by the force of water instead of the steam-engine; and, not having the friendly sides of the shaft to protect, as in the former instance, Carry declared she found the lift a much more giddy mode of conveyance, and altogether expressed disapprobation of it in strong terms. However, Mr. Greystone was there, doing the honours of his "ain fire-side!" and, let me say confidentially, she never seemed much alarmed in his society.

So, then, we went to look at the pipes which conducted the hot air, (for it is by that the mighty furnaces are fed,) and at the engines, which worked the whole concern, and raised the "blast," which gives their distinguishing name and character to the furnaces. This introduction of *hot blast*, or rather of *heating* the blast before its entering the furnace, is, I believe, of date as recent as 1829. As a proof of its value, I quote the following testimony, borne by a well-known proprietor in the Black Country. "This produced a revolution next in importance to the application of the blast-engine; for by it, the weekly quantity made was increased from eighty or ninety tons to 120, 140, 160, and even 200 tons per week. Scotland is greatly indebted to this discovery, for to it is mainly owing the development of the iron trade there.

"There is also another important feature connected with hot blast, not to be overlooked, which is this. Owing to its application, furnaces worked better, both as to yield and quantity, and to so great an extent, that it was deemed *practicable*, and since found to be *advantageous*, to stop their working on the Sabbath. There is no doubt that blast furnaces have made much more iron by standing on Sunday than by working; the *rationale* of which apparent paradox must be obvious to every mind."

Obvious enough, truly, when heard in connection with another fact. "Of all the blast furnace masters who have *failed*," said Mr. Greystone, on an occasion much more recent than that of our visit to his works, and when many more failures had transpired, "I believe without *one* exception, certainly with not more than one or two, they have been those who worked their furnaces on Sunday!" Honesty towards God, as well as man, is after all the best policy.

Should any one feel at all curious as to the size

or power of these furnaces, I may just observe for his satisfaction, that the amount of coal consumed by these greedy monsters was somewhere about twelve boat-loads in the twenty-four hours; each boat containing the moderate allowance of twelve or fourteen tons.

And then we saw the "cast." I could not, nor shall I try, to describe this beautiful sight. By the term "cast" is, of course, signified the moulds or shapes into which the liquid iron is received as, issuing from the furnace—a stream of running *gold*—its course is guided to where those narrow beds of sand lie waiting for their fiery occupants. This process of casting is repeated twice in the day, early in the morning, and at five in the afternoon. In the words of a furnace man, "Our furnace, sir, be just like a cow; she's no good if she aint milked morning and night." Very much like a cow she looked, certainly; but the heat emitted by that flowing "milk," as, guided by the "pig staves," it hurried to its allotted resting-places! It beat anything I experienced at the forge works, and that is saying a good deal. Even the men who guided its course seemed overpowered, and shaded their faces as they leaned across. Never, surely, did "pigs" present so sunny a spectacle, as, encircled in their sandy beds, they lay, a brilliant shining mass. I need hardly say that it is from the bottom of the furnace the melted ore flows out. In the morning, the flames above receive the solid stone, which sinks as it melts, until at the appointed time the blast is taken off; a tap is turned for the purpose, and out it pours, a dazzling stream of light. There was great excitement, when, at the end, the blast was again put on, to see the fire bursting out from the aperture at the bottom in one tremendous blaze, and to see the sudden clearance made by all who stood within its influence. I ran myself, I blush to state; but it really had a terrific appearance.

And so we bade farewell, for a time, to the Abbotsford furnaces; but I have seen them since then, and on a dark and stormy night have stood and watched the reflection of those flaming tongues in the gloomy water which flowed beneath. Truly, that lurid glare, above, below, was what a demon might have been supposed to revel in! And, having admitted this, I dare not own that I enjoyed the scene; yet it had a horrid fascination which I can even now recall.

But that other view, from the top of that lofty hill which commands so *fair*, so *foul* a prospect! Strange thus to combine adjectives of such differing import; yet so it was. "The land was as the garden of Eden before us," and behind us —!

The ascent was steep, and, being a hot day, toilsome; but we were in high feather, and our friend Mr. Frank Greystone was with us. He was always with us now: we were not tired of him; that would indeed have been difficult. I hope no one else is tired of hearing about him.

There was a monument on the brow of this hill: somebody's "Folly" I think they called it; and to get the view in perfection, it was usual to ascend by steps to the top. However, the ladies said they had climbed enough, and their will was law.

"And now," said Mr. Greystone, "attend to me;

look where I tell you, and in no other direction. Stand there now, and say if that is not glorious." We did look; that was the fair side of the hill, and very fair it seemed, stretched out before us on that summer day. A quiet English landscape, it lay at our feet in calm repose.

"Not one rude sound disturbs,
Of heaven and earth the peace profound."

A very wide prospect too it was, and goodly portions of many counties contained therein. Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Shropshire, and how many more I know not, were in view. There was the stalwart Wrekin, his sturdy, comfortable, well-clad sides breasting—I was going to say the waves—well, he *would* have breasted them, had he not been born an inland hill. There were the Malvern Mountains, "tantalizing by scanty revelation of the glory that lay behind." Other hills there were of nearer mark, and others far in the horizon, "melting in finest perspective away." Rumours there were of Welsh mountains, visible to the "naked eye." Nearer home the view was not less pleasing; rustic hamlets, dotted here and there, and now a farmhouse with its comfortable homestead, spoke of English comfort and English plenty. Fields sloped down before us in the prime of verdant beauty, by noble trees encircled, and "happy in the protection of their embrace." There, too, immediately beside us, lay the village through which we had but lately passed, and which, with its tall church spire rising up among surrounding cottages, was a beacon for many miles around. From no other point did it, however, offer so goodly a spectacle as from that at which we now gazed on it.

"Beautiful!" murmured Carry, as Frank Greystone's eyes appealed to hers for approbation.

"And now turn," he said. We did so, and lo! "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

We turned and saw, not chaos—that would, in comparison, have been a lively prospect; in fact, at first we saw *nothing*—nothing but one dense, dark, rolling cloud of smoke. As the eye gradually became enabled to penetrate the heavy vapour, it was evident that a tract of mining district, of many miles extent, visibly clothed in all its gloomy horrors, lay stretched before us. Never before had the country thus appeared to us in its *true colours*! Never before had we so realized the terrific frightfulness of that land in which we had been sojourning. That human beings had existence in those horrid plains, nay, that we had lately breathed, and should return to breathe its polluted atmosphere, was an idea appalling in its truthfulness.

I have already made use of lines, written upon the neighbourhood by one who had frequent opportunity of viewing it in every aspect. The present description could hardly have a better summing up than with a few by the same pen, descriptive of the scene by night.

"Now stand we on the Beacon Hill, while night is closing round,
What time the stars come forth to fill heaven's darkening blue profound.

Gaze on in wonderment. Be still! bid lightsome thoughts retire,
And meditate, with solemn thrill, on this our land of fire,

And meditate, with solemn thrill, on this our land of fire,

Behold, where late with vapour dim, the flames burnt faint and low,
Now bright as hosts of seraphim, in countless ranks they glow.
They pant, they throb, instinct with life, they roar in muttered fire;
Their sounds are as the sounds of strife, throughout our land of fire.

And look through all the troubled air, a lurid gleam is shed,
That quivers with a flickering glare, meet torchlight for the dead;
It never brightens into light, it can but awe inspire,
And add fresh horror to the night, in this our land of fire."

Truly there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous! We had not long returned to the vicarage, when a gentleman was announced as requesting an audience with Miss Ingram. A gentleman! what a desecration; he would have spurned the title—a *poet*, a Black Country poet. His living was earned, however, not wholly by poetry; *pills* asked it out, for he had studied medicine, and was an itinerating doctor. His name (I remember it, having heard the same in other parts) was Smith. He had heard of our intended visit to the Hill, and had "brought the lady a little poetical suffusion as a momentum." Here is the "suffusion:"—

"The chimneys were smoking, the fires burned bright,
As I stood on the high hill, and gazed on the sight;
And much did I marvel, as earnest my gaze,
How ever the people could live in the blaze.
I thought of the masters, I thought of the men,
I thought of the miners at work in their den;
I thought of the iron, and how it was wrought,
And sorely my spirit did sink at the thought.

But then I turned backward, and lo! I did see then
A country as fair as the garden of Eden;
I thought of the meadows, I thought of the sheep,
I thought of the farmer, how sound in his sleep;
I thought of the wife I could love there so true,
And then I turned round, and, my darling, 'twas you."

We had scarcely finished roaring over this composition, and had dismissed our laureate with a "consideration," when a knock was heard at the hall-door—a short, emphatic knock. The door opened, and in walked—a lion of the Black Country, Ralph Trelawny, Esq., at your service, or rather, not *always* so.

And who was this shaggy lion, so good in the main, withal sometimes so rough and terrifying? Who was Ralph Trelawny?

Well, strictly speaking, he did not belong to the Black Country; his residence, by rights, was, as from his name we had at first inferred, in Cornwall. There lay his chief property; but his heart was, nevertheless, among the mines and furnaces. Yes, and his time and his purse were there given freely too; and though there were many who did not hold with all his notions, and many who laughed at him as an oddity, yet, among high and low, rich and poor, the name of Ralph Trelawny was held in respect.

"And I hear that you are going to leave us soon, Miss Ingram; to run away from this pretty place. Is it not a pretty place, now?"

She laughed, and said, "Very pretty."

"Well, as you think so, I hope you will be tempted back again—eh?"

She blushed, and said, "perhaps at some time she might pay another visit to her friends." Oh, the young hypocrite! when all the time she knew—what I did not know then—that, only that

morning, she had promised to come back and live among the mines, ay, and that soon too!

"We have been lionizing the last week," said Mrs. Barry; "it would never do to send them home without seeing everything."

"Certainly not; of course you have been to look at Mr. Fate's schools."

No, we had never seen that doomed institution.

"Not! then you don't know how they teach in the Black Country, that's certain. Have you seen the fire holes?"

No, we had not seen the fire holes.

"Why, Mrs. Barry, do you set up to do the honours of the country, and omit some of its greatest curiosities?"

"That comes of living in a place too full of wonders," said she, laughingly.

"What are the fire holes?" said Carry.

"Never heard of them? Why, they were renowned when your grandmother's great-great-grandmother was learning her horn-book. They are the hot surfaces of pits which have been on fire for more than 200 years, and are smouldering away now."

"How very unpleasant," said Miss Ingram.

"How is it supposed these pits were originally fired?" asked her more intelligent brother, but without eliciting a very satisfactory explanation.

We saw Mr. Trelawny once again before we left L. R., and he had then heard who was likely to become Mrs. Frank Greystone. His greeting on the occasion was somewhat characteristic. Going up to Carry, and seizing both her hands, he looked her full in the face and began: "And so! and so! and so! eh?"

"Well, Mr. Trelawny," said she, laughing and blushing, "what is the matter?"

"Matter! why that my friend Greystone has sprung a little mine, ay, and fired it too, upon other people's property. Well, well, when are you coming back to us?"

However, this he could not get out of her; so he went on: "Now, mind you, I shall watch your proceedings closely."

Carry said he did her too much honour.

"Not at all; it is not for your sake I shall do it; I want to see a model wife for an iron-master."

"Then that is what Carry will never be," said Mr. Lewis Ingram; "she has not enough spice about her."

"I don't agree with you; iron-masters have enough, and rather too much, spice among themselves: they want more sugar in their wives, and I am mistaken if there is not plenty of that article here. And, Mrs. Greystone elect, let the men, and the men's families, taste the sugar as well as the master. I don't say, regard all his workmen as you would your own household servants; that would be simply impossible; but do your best for them. Remember they will have a strong claim on you, and one which, in this country, is sadly ignored. Don't you ignore it. Look after the wives, look after the children, try and let them be the better for your influence, and teach them all to bless the day when you and your brother first visited the Black Country."

VARIETIES.

GEORGE III'S FAVOURITE DAUGHTER.—A lady who was in the habit of close attendance on the Princess Amelia during her last illness, described some of the latter interviews which took place between the princess and her royal father, George III, and which seldom failed to turn on the momentous topic of the future world, as being singularly affecting. "My dear child," said his Majesty to her, on one of these occasions, "you have ever been a good child to your parents; we have nothing where-with to reproach you; but I need not tell you that it is not of yourself alone that you can be saved, and that your acceptance with God must depend on your faith and trust in the merits of the Redeemer." "I know it," replied the princess, mildly, but emphatically, "and I could wish for no better trust." Nothing, we are assured, could be more striking than to see the king, aged and nearly blind, bending over the couch on which the princess lay, and speaking to her about salvation through Christ; the one great topic of absorbing interest alike to high and low, to young and old, to sovereign and subject.

HONEST BOTTLES.—It is a common practice for bottle-blowers to manufacture for wine merchants bottles called twelve, or thirteen, or fourteen, or fifteen to the dozen, the meaning of which is, that 15 bottles of those called "fifteen to the dozen" hold no more than 12 honest bottles of the size called twelve to the dozen. Now, 12 honest bottles ought to hold two gallons of wine, *besides leaving room for corking*; but if you buy wine in these dishonest bottles, at, say 32s. per dozen, you must get one dozen and 3 bottles, at a cost of 40s., in order to have the same quantity as 12 honest bottles will hold. In buying wine, then, in such bottles, you will have been grossly cheated; for you will have been led to suppose you were only paying 32s. when you were really paying 40s. per dozen.

THE MARQUIS WELLESLEY AS GOVERNOR-GENERAL IN INDIA.—At the period when Lord Wellesley assumed the government, nothing was considered so unfashionable as religion, and even a formal attendance on Christian ordinances on the Sunday was a singularity which inspired contempt. But, like other statesmen of Mr. Pitt's school, he considered religion as the safeguard of social order, and the most effectual promoter of human happiness, and he determined to throw the whole weight of his government into the scale. After he had been six months in the country, he issued a proclamation to forbid horse-racing and gambling on Sunday. He stated that the profanation of the day set apart for religious devotions was destructive of the good order and morals of society, and contrary to the duties and ordinances of the Protestant religion. He therefore ordered all magistrates and officers commanding military stations to prohibit these practices, and announced that all parties so offending should forfeit the protection of government, and be sent back forthwith to Europe. He issued a proclamation likewise against Sunday newspapers. He never failed to appear in his seat at church, as the representative of the British Government.—*Marshman's "Life of Dr. Carey."*

THE WROXETER EXCAVATIONS.—To an ordinary visitor the old city would be a very disappointing place. We had seen in Birmingham advertisements of "Excursion Trains to the Buried City of Wroxeter—the British Pompeii," and could easily believe what Excavator told us of the proceedings of the excursionists on their arrival: how that the majority declared themselves "sold," and went off forthwith to the refreshment-tent; some thought it hardly worth while to travel to look at rubbish, and asked where the houses, doors, and windows were. "How could there be a city without houses?" to which Excavator, somewhat proud of his knowledge, would reply that for want of rain they hadn't come up yet. The simple truth is, that no one should go to Wroxeter with overwrought

expectations, or who is not prepared to see much, not to say very much, with his mind. Moreover, it seems to me that a visit should first be paid to the Museum at Shrewsbury, for, having seen the many interesting relics there arranged, things of daily life, the visitor, on coming to the city, would be able to rebuild and repeople it in imagination.—*White's "All Round the Wrekin."*

BRITISH CAPITAL.—The following statement of the capital, in round numbers, of some of the principal securities dealt in on the London Stock Exchange, though showing a total of no less than £1,288,000,000, is far below the truth, since it "is irrespective of the shares of provincial joint-stock banks, of many land, discount, and other companies, and of the large amount of foreign loans, foreign railway shares, and other foreign securities held here, the aggregate of which it is impossible to arrive at, or even to estimate with anything like precision."

British funded and unfunded debt	£805,000,000
British railway shares and debentures	325,500,000
Indian railway shares held in England	20,500,000
Colonial government securities	10,000,000
Indian home bond debt	8,800,000
London joint-stock banks	15,500,000
Irish and Scotch banks	12,750,000
Bank stock	14,500,000
Insurance companies	15,000,000
Mines, British and foreign	10,000,000
Steam companies	5,000,000
Telegraph companies	9,000,000
Docks, canals, waterworks, bridges, etc.	20,500,000
Gas companies	6,700,000

£1,288,750,000

Fenn's Compendium of English and Foreign Funds.

HINTS TO HUSBANDS.—Do not jest with your wives upon any subject in which there is danger of wounding their feelings: remember she treasures every word you utter. Do not speak of great merits in another man's wife, in a way to imply faults in your own. Do not reproach your wife with personal defects, for if she has sensibility, you inflict a wound difficult to heal. Do not treat your wife with inattention in company. Do not upbraid your wife in the presence of a third party; her sense of your disregard for her feelings will prevent her from acknowledging her fault. Do not entertain your wife by praising the beauty and accomplishments of other women. If you would have a pleasant home and cheerful wife, pass your evenings under your own roof. Do not be stern and silent in your own house, and remarkable for sociability elsewhere.

MUTTON CLUBS IN INDIA.—We are going to join the mutton club. This is one of the great social institutions of the Mofussil, that is, of all Northern India except Calcutta. The mutton club consists of those residents at a station who unite for the laudable purpose of supplying their tables twice a week with joints of gram-fed mutton. A shepherd is hired; sheep are bought; gram (a sort of pea) is supplied to the animals in a long trough two or three times a day; and the club's butcher every week selects from the stock for slaughter as many sheep as may be required. The members receive in regular rotation a fore-quarter, a hind-quarter, a saddle, etc., and always arrange their dinner-parties, if possible, for hind-quarter or saddle day. At the end of each month, the secretary (usually an active-minded lady) adds up the expenses, divides the sum by the number of members, and receives from each his share of the cost. When a new mutton club is started, each member deposits a sum, commonly £5; and when he leaves the station, his successor in office, or some other person, buys up the share at the price originally paid for it, provided the club be in a flourishing condition.—*From London to Lucknow.*